CLATSOP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FLAVEL HOUSE MUSEUM

Built for Captain George Flavel, 1885

Original drawing by Carl Leick. Courtesy of the Architectural Heritage Center, Portland, Oregon

FLAVEL HOUSE MUSEUM

441 8TH STREET ASTORIA

The Flavel House & Carriage House are significant architectural and historical treasures for not only Clatsop County but the entire Pacific Northwest.

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CLATSOP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Museum

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Flavel House History

The Flavel House Museum was the home of Captain George Flavel (1823–1893), one of Astoria's most influential citizens in the late 1800s. Captain Flavel was a noted bar pilot on the Columbia River and a prominent businessman. His Queen Anne style house was designed by German-born architect Carl W. Leick and was completed in the spring of 1886 as his retirement home. The Captain lived here for seven years with his wife Mary Christina Boelling (1839–1928) and his two grown daughters, Nellie and Katie. The couple's son, George Conrad Flavel, never lived in his parent's new residence as he was already married and living in a house of his own.

The house remained in the family until 1934 when George and Mary's great-granddaughter, Patricia Jean Flavel, gave the property to the city as a memorial to her family. In 1936 there was talk of tearing the house down and establishing an outdoor community park on the property. However, the city had financial difficulties and decided to return the property to Patricia Flavel. That same year the residence and grounds were deeded to Clatsop County with the understanding that both would be kept in good repair and used for public purposes. From 1937 through World War II the Public Health Department, the Red Cross, and the local Welfare Commission all had offices in the house. In 1951, there was once again talk of tearing the house down, this time to make way for a parking lot for the County Courthouse. Concerned citizens organized to save the home and the Flavel House was made into a local history museum managed by the Clatsop County Historical Society, while still under the ownership of the County. Eventually the County transferred full ownership of the property to the Historical Society.

About the Interior

The Flavel House is approximately 11,600 square feet and consists of two and a half stories, a single story rear kitchen, a four-story tower and a full basement. The interior wood work around the doors, windows, and staircases are Eastlake-influenced in design. The Douglas Fir doors, mouldings, and wainscoting were faux wood grained by a master craftsman to look like exotic hardwoods such as mahogany and burl rosewood. The wood likely came from a mill in Portland or San Francisco and was shipped to Astoria by steamer.

Six fireplaces grace the home and feature different imported tiles from around the world, elaborate hand-carved mantels and a patterned metal firebox that was designed for burning coal. The fourteen foot high ceilings on the first floor and the twelve foot high ceilings on the second floor are embellished with plaster medallions and plaster crown moldings. The house was very modern with wall-to-wall carpeting, gas lighting, indoor plumbing, and a central heating system.

The formal parlor was only used by the family on special occasions, such as when receiving important guests. It is believed that the Captain's body was viewed in this room after he passed away in 1893.

The First Floor is comprised of the public rooms such as the grand entrance hall, the formal parlor, the music room (the scene of musical recitals by the Flavel daughters), the library (the heart of the house), the dining room, and the conservatory. The butler's pantry, the kitchen, and the mudroom make up the housekeeping area.

The Second Floor features the main bathroom, five bedchambers, and a small room, which was used as a sewing room or storage room.

The Attic Floor is a large, unfinished area with two small plain bedrooms used by the Flavel's domestic help. The tower gave the Captain a wide view of Astoria and the Columbia River, so he could keep an eye on the local ship traffic.

The Basement of the house originally had a dirt floor and contained the large wood burning furnace.

The library fireplace is made of oak and the ceramic tiles around the mantel were done in high relief patterns depicting birds with clusters of acorns and oak leaves.

About the Exterior

The Flavel House rests on park-like grounds covering an entire city block. It has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1951. The Queen Anne architectural style, popular from 1880 to 1910, can be seen in the house's steeply pitched roof, patterned shingles, and cut-away bay windows. Other characteristics of the Queen Anne style are the octagonal-shaped tower, the one-story wrap-around porch and its asymmetrical facade. Decorative elements of the Stick and Italianate styles are also apparent in the vertical stickwork, the bracketed eaves, and the hooded moldings above the windows and doors. Outlining the roof and verandas of the house is the original wrought iron cresting.

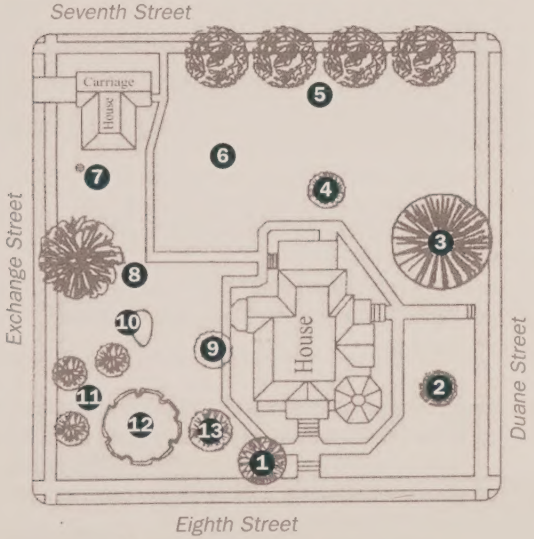
About the Carriage House

The Carriage House was built on the south-west corner of the property in 1887. It served as the place where the family kept their carriage, sleigh, and small buggies. It also had three temporary holding stalls for their horses, a tack room, and a hay loft upstairs. In the mid 1890s, the Carriage House was home to the family's hired caretaker, Alex Murray. In time, automobiles, including the Flavel's Studebaker sedan, found a home in the Carriage House and the family's driver kept a room upstairs. Today the Carriage House functions as the Visitor Center, museum store, and exhibit hall for the Flavel House Museum as well as the administrative offices of the Clatsop County Historical Society.

The original stained glass and hand-painted window graces the main entrance.

About the Grounds

Shortly after the house was built, the family gardener, Louis Schultz, began planting trees, fine roses, and many varieties of bulbs and shrubs. Many of the plants found in the Flavel yard today are typical of those found in Victorian gardens. Gracing the Flavel House are nine trees: a Camper- down Elm, Giant Sequoia Redwood, four Rock or Cork Elms, Bay Laurel, Pear tree, and a Ginkgo, which were officially honored by the Oregon ***Heritage Tree Program*** at a state-wide dedication ceremony held on the grounds in 2004. The Captain had acquired most of these unique trees from his many voyages to places all over the world.



1. Ginkgo Tree—original* *Ginkgo biloba*
2. Camperdown Elm—original*† *Ulmus glabra Camperdownii*
3. Giant Sequoia Redwood *Sequoiadendron giganteum*
4. Cherry Tree *Prunus*
5. Rock or Cork Elms (4) *Ulmus thomasii* —rare for this part of the world*†
6. Raised Garden
7. White Lilac *Syringa vulgaris*
8. Big Leaf Maple—*Acer macrophyllum* —from the Pow Wow Tree* in Gladstone, OR
9. Rhododendron *Rhododendron Hymenanthes*
10. Pond Installed in 1928
11. Black Hawthorn *Crataegus douglasii*
12. Bay Laurel Tree* *Laurus nobilis*
13. Pear Tree—original*† *Pyrus communis*

*Oregon Heritage Tree Program

† Planted prior to construction of the house